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NASS RIVER TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP

By E. SAPIR

THE following Nass River Indian (Nisqa"a) terms of relationship were obtained in May, 1916, from Chief C. B. Barton (Indian name P'ä'l), of Kincolith, B. C. Chief Barton was at the time engaged as deputy in Ottawa on tribal business.¹ The orthography here employed is the same as that explained in my Sketch of the Social Organization of the Nass River Indians (Geological Survey of Canada, Anthropological Series, Bulletin no. 7, 1915); see pp. 29, 30.

I. NASS RIVER TERMS

In the following table it is to be understood that, unless otherwise indicated, a term may be used by either a male or a female. Most or all of the terms doubtless have a wider, phratric or clan, significance than is here indicated. The ending $-\iota'(i)$, -e'(i), -'i is the first person singular possessive suffix, "my."

Note further:

- 1. Step-relations are designated as real relations.
- 2. The parents of a married couple are not looked upon as relatives. This is strikingly different from the custom of many western American Indian tribes, among whom there is frequently a specific term for "child-in-law's parent."
 - 3. The parent-in-law of a brother or sister is not considered a

¹ Since this set of terms was obtained from Mr. Barton, an opportunity has presented itself in April, 1920, to go over the data with two West Coast Indians visiting Ottawa on Government business—Mr. P. C. Calder, a Nass River Indian of the Guari'e'n tribe, from the village of Greenville, and Mr. G. Matheson, a Tsimshian Indian, who was brought up among the Nass River Indians and is thus better acquainted with the Nass than with his own dialect and who has for a number of years resided in the Lower Fraser country. As both of these Indians are also conversant with the Tsimshian dialect, I obtained from them an independent set of Tsimshian kinship terms. This set supplements a Tsimshian set obtained in 1918 from Mr. W. Beynon, of Port Simpson, B. C., Mr. Barbeau's chief Tsimshian interpreter. I shall present my Tsimshian data in another paper.

	Term	Translation	Vocative
I.	'o'''ls-i'	my great-grandfather, great-grand- mother (see also 2 and 3)	'o''ls³
2.	nıy€"-e' ⁱ	my grandfather (paternal or maternal); may also be used for great-grand- father; grandparent's brother	<i>y€</i> ' ^{€3}
3.	nt'se''et's-i'	my grandmother (paternal or mater- nal); may also be used for great- grandmother; grandparent's sister	tsi ts (note unglot- talized ts, doubt- less due to imita- tion of simplified children's pro- nunciation) ³
	hoxdä''k'en-e'	my grandchild; great-grandchild	hoxdä''k'ın'
5.	ท ว gพร ^{• /ว} d-เ'	my father; father's brother; maternal aunt's husband	pä p' (said by man) hädi''' (said by woman)
	$n\omega^{\prime\prime\prime}$ - i	my mother; mother's sister	nä''ä³
7•	<i>lko^{-νμ}lgw-ι'</i> , plur.	my child; man's brother's child; woman's sister's child; husband's brother's child; man's brother's wife's child; wife's sister's child; <i>probably</i> also woman's sister's husband's child	łko''ułku, plur. łgi'
	łko''ułkum ga''ad-	my son (lit.: my male child)	nä''ät'³
7b.	łko''ulkum änä'g- ai'i		7 12
Q	$n eg p e' p - \iota' \dots \dots$	my daughter (<i>lit</i> : my female child) my mother's brother	dä·t³ pi·pʻ
9.	nıxdä''-'i	my father's sister; mother's brother's wife	dä t'
	kwvcli'c-i'	my brother's child (woman speaking); sister's child (man speaking); hus- band's sister's child ²	kwvcli'c
10a.	kwvcli'cm ga'ad-		
	ι'	my brother's son (woman speaking), sister's son (man speaking) (lit.: my male kwvcli'c)	
10b.	kwvclı'cm änä"		
	ai''	my brother's daughter (woman speak- ing), sister's daughter (man speaking) (lit.: my female kwvclı'c)	·
11.	wa′g-ι' ⁱ	my brother (man speaking); man's father's brother's son; mother's sis- ter's son	wäk'
12.	łgi''gw-i'	my sister (woman speaking); woman's father's brother's daughter; mother's sister's daughter	lgi''iku

¹ Also heard as $\ddot{a}n\ddot{a}''.ai''$ (' = glottal stop with velar resonance). In Nootka' develops regularly from older Wakashan q'.

^{2&}quot;My husband's sister's child" was given as kwvclı'ckw-ı', but this is almost certainly merely the plural in -k" of kwvclı'c-ı' and should thus be understood as "my brother's children (woman speaking), my husband's sister's children." See F. Boas, Tsimshian, §44 ("Handbook of American Indian Languages," Bulletin 40, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1911).

³ See supplementary notes at end.

	Term	Translation	Vocative
13.	kımxtı'-'i	my brother (woman speaking), sister (man speaking); woman's father's brother's son, mother's sister's son; man's mother's sister's daughter, father's brother's daughter	kımxtı' [*]
-	kwvtxa'w''-'i	my cross cousin, <i>i.e.</i> , father's sister's child, mother's brother's child	'ω'.′′ω _S
15.	nä'kc-ı'	my husband; wife	näkc³
	łä'mc-ı'	father-in-law, mother-in-law; son-in- law, daughter-in-law; father-in-law's brother, mother-in-law's brother	łämc
	łä'mcιm ga'·ad-ι' .	my father-in-law, son-in-law, parent-in-law's brother (lit.: male parent-in-law or child-in-law)	
16b.	łä'mcım änä'' ai' ⁱ		
		my mother-in-law, daughter-in-law (lit.: female parent-in-law or child-in-law)	_
	q'alä''an-i'	my wife's brother; sister's husband (man speaking)	q'alä'' ^a n
	kwvdji 'c-i'	my husband's sister; brother's wife (woman speaking)	kwvdji`'c
19.	$k'\omega''i'kc-\iota'\ldots$	my wife's sister, man's brother's wife; husband's brother, woman's sister's husband	k'w't'kc
20.	łämcł wä ^{rä} g-i'	my brother's child-in-law (man speak- ing) (lit.: child-in-law of my [man's] brother)	
21.	lämel (l)gi''- gw-i'	my sister's child-in-law (woman speak- ing) (<i>lit.</i> : child-in-law of my [wo- man's] sister)	
22.	łämcł gimxdi'-'i	my [man's] sister's child-in-law; woman's brother's child-in-law (lit.: child-in-law of my sibling of oppo- site sex)	
	gımxdıl lä'mc-ı'	my father-in-law's sister (lit.: sister of my father-in-law ²)	
24.	łgi ^{· 'i} kuł łä'mc-ι'	my mother-in-law's sister (lit.: sister of my mother-in-law)	
25.	no x^a - i'	my father's brother's wife	nox3
26.	näkcl nixdä''-'i	my father's sister's husband (lit.: husband of my paternal aunt)	
27.	kwvclı'ck ^u ł nä'kc		
	-i'	my wife's brother's children (lit.: brother's children (see 10.) of my wife)	
28.	wılä'''ıck";	relative: my blood relative ³	
29.	nvwvlwilä''ick"	relative; my blood relative ³ relative by marriage ³	

¹ By "sibling" is meant "brother or sister."

² But not "brother of my mother-in-law," though this is quite possible etymologically. For "mother-in-law's brother," läme is used (see 16).

³ See supplementary notes at end.

relative; nor, reciprocally, is the child-in-law's brother or sister a relative.

4. Relatives by affinity continue to be called by the same terms after the death of the connecting link. Thus, a man's brother-in-law (wife's brother) is termed $q'al\ddot{a}'^{a}n$ even after his wife's death. This again is contrary to the custom of many western American Indian tribes.

II. LINGUISTIC COMMENTS

A few linguistic remarks are possible, though, for the most part, the terms do not yield to any far-reaching linguistic analysis. Most striking is the employment of distinctive vocatives. In most cases (nos. 1, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25) the vocative is merely the noun stem, unprovided with a possessive suffix. In a considerable number of cases, however, the vocative is different from the noun stem. Sometimes the vocative is etymologically unrelated to it (nos. 5, 7a, 7b, perhaps also 14), more often it is a shorter or otherwise modified form of the stem (nos. 2, 3, 6, 8, 9). A number of nouns beginning with no- ($n\iota$ -, n-) lose this element in the vocative (nos. 2, 3, 8, 9). It is probable that this prefix occurs also in the term for "father" (no. 5); possibly also in that for "mother" (no. 6).

The etymology of the *n*- prefix is quite obscure, as there seem to be no obvious analogies in the formative elements of either Nass or Tsimshian proper ascertained by Boas. It may be an old classificatory prefix for terms of relationship, now preserved only in four or five terms. Possibly, however, it is the subjective first person singular pronominal prefix *n*- "I" (e.g., ne-ya"ne "I say so," contrast de-ya "he says so"; see Boas, op. cit., \$53), originally characterizing, it may be, terms of relationship as contrasted with other nouns. In that case such a form as ni-ye" "grandfather" would originally have meant "my grandfather," only secondarily, as the use of the n-prefix in a possessive pronominal sense became obsolete, "grandfather." The use of the first personal singular possessive pronominal suffix -i' in such terms of relationship would be due to the analogy of the vast majority of nouns. At any rate,

analogous pronominal usages, of an isolated nature, for terms of relationship are found in several American Indian languages.¹

The terms kwvcli'c (no. 10), kwvtxa'w' (no. 14), and kwvdji'c (no. 18) possess a prefixed element kwv-, as is clearly shown by the corresponding Tsimshian terms sle's, txaɔ' and dzu's.² The prefix is not listed by Boas in his grammar, but it seems not unlikely that it is identical with the gu- of guliks-"backward; also reflexive object," the second element of which can hardly be other than the prefix loks-"strange, different, by itself." This analysis makes it at least possible that kwv- is a reciprocal prefix: "each other." The terms kwvtax'w' "cross-cousin" and kwvdji'c "woman's sister-in-law" are, indeed, directly reciprocal terms; while kwvcli'c "child of sibling of opposite sex to speaker," though not strictly a reciprocal term, does involve what might be called "sex reciprocity" between the speaker and the connecting link.

It is barely possible that $kwv-txa'\omega'$ (no. 14) contains, besides, the common prefix txa-"entirely, all," and that the stem proper is -' ω '. If this is so, the term may originally have been a reciprocal collective: "all cousins to one another." A stem -' ω ' would make the vocative ' ω'' appear somewhat less enigmatic.

 $nvwvlwvl\ddot{a}$ " vck^u (no. 29) is obviously a reduplicated form of $wl\ddot{a}$ " vck^u (no. 28), preceded by a prefixed element nv, which is either a phonetically weakened form of reciprocal na-"each other, one another," or another example of the relationship prefix na-already discussed.

The vocative $d\ddot{a}$ 't' (no. 9) shows a reduplicated form of the stem analogous to $p\iota$ 'p' (no. 8).

¹ The hypothesis here advanced seems fairly unplausible from the purely Tsimshian standpoint. I hope, at some future time, to adduce certain comparative linguistic evidence that serves materially to strengthen it.

² See F. Boas, "Tsimshian Mythology," *Thirty-first Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1916, p. 493. Boas' Tsimshian orthography is modified to correspond to my own.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 323, no. 115.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 327, no. 133.

⁵ Op. cit., p. 318, no. 93.

⁶ Op. cit., p. 319, no. 95.

III. DISCUSSION OF TERMS

- I. A considerable proportion of the terms are indifferently used as regards the sex of the person designated (nos. 1, 4, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29). Others explicitly refer to the sex of the person designated (nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26). In a few cases the sex is fixed in opposition to the sex of the speaker (nos. 13, 19). In nos. 7a and b, 10a and b, and 16a and b the explicit sex reference is a purely secondary feature.
- 2. In a considerable number of cases the sex of the speaker is taken account of. These are: nos. 5 (in vocative), 10, 11, 12, 13 (conditionally), 17, 18, 19 (conditionally), 20, 21, 22 (conditionally), 27.
- 3. The sex of a connecting relative or of connecting relatives is considered in nos. 5 ("father's brother"), 6 ("mother's sister"), 7 ("child of sibling of same sex as speaker"), 8, 9, 10 (conditionally), 11 ("nephew, niece"), 12 ("nephew, niece"), 13 ("nephew, niece"), 14, 17 (conditionally), 18 (conditionally), 19 (conditionally), 20 (conditionally), 21 (conditionally), 22 (conditionally), 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 (conditionally). It is particularly noteworthy that the sex of the connecting relative (father's or son's generation) does not count in nos. 2, 3, and 4.
- 4. Reciprocity is illustrated in nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29. Not counting the last two terms, which are hardly relationship terms proper, it will be noticed that all these reciprocal terms, except *lämc* (no. 16), are terms of the same generation. Reciprocity in nomenclature does not obtain, as it so often does in America, between grandparents and grandchildren, nor between uncle-aunts and nephew-nieces.
- 5. The distribution of the terms for "uncle" and "aunt" and, reciprocally, for "nephew" and "niece" is conditioned by whether or not the siblings of the older generation are of the same sex. If they are, the "uncle" is merged with "father" (no. 5), the "aunt" with "mother" (no. 6), the "nephew" or "niece" with "child" (no. 7). If not, special terms are used, "paternal aunt" (no. 9), "maternal uncle" (no. 8), and "cross-sibling's child"

^{1 &}quot;Cross-sibling" means "woman's brother" or "man's sister."

- (no. 10). A natural consequence of this distribution of terms is the classification of cousins into "siblings" (nos. 11, 12, 13) and "cross cousins" (no. 14). Whether these facts are explainable on the basis of the exogamic phratry organization of the Tsimshian tribes, as would be currently assumed, or of the levirate, is not clear. Perhaps neither factor is the historically primary cause.
- 6. The distribution of terms for "uncle's or aunt's spouse" and, reciprocally, for "spouse's niece or nephew" is somewhat curious. The maternal aunt's husband is classed with the father (no. 5); reciprocally, the wife's sister's child with one's own child (no. 7). The paternal aunt's husband is designated by a descriptive term, "husband of paternal aunt" (no. 26), to which corresponds, as reciprocal, a descriptive term, "cross-sibling's-child of wife" (no. 27). The maternal uncle's wife is classed with the paternal aunt (no. 9); reciprocally, the husband's sister's child is classed with one's cross-sibling's child (no. 10). Finally, the paternal uncle's wife is classed with the mother (no. 25); the corresponding reciprocal term for the husband's brother's child is classed with one's own child (no. 7).
- 7. Somewhat unexpected is the distribution of terms for "sibling's child-in-law" and, reciprocally, for "parent-in-law's sibling." The child-in-law of the brother or sister is consistently designated by purely descriptive terms (nos. 20, 21, 22). The reciprocals, however, are only partly analogous. The sister of the parent-in-law is descriptively defined (nos. 23, 24), but the brother of the parent-in-law is merged with the parent-in-law (no. 16).
- 8. The fairly extended use of transparent descriptive terms (cf. English "father-in-law") is noteworthy (nos. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27). Analogous formations occur further south in Washo and in certain Shoshonean systems. That these terms are to be looked upon as genuine terms of relationship, not merely as formations ad hoc, seems to be indicated by the fact that their range of actual significance is more restricted than that of their etymological significance (see note to no. 23; also supplementary note 3, p. 261). Thus gimxdil lä'mc-i' "my father-in-law's sister" (no. 23) has a far wider etymological significance, as it might also refer to "my

son-in-law's sister, daughter-in-law's brother, mother-in-law's brother." Of these three relationships, however, the first two fall outside the circle of recognized affinity, while the third is merged with the parent-in-law.

Summarizing the most striking peculiarities of the Nass River system of terms of relationship, we may point out that it:

- I. Makes considerable, but by no means exhaustive, use of the principles of reciprocity and of sex differences in speaker, person designated, and connecting link.
 - 2. Rather frequently merges lineal with collateral kindred.
- 3. Confuses, to at least some extent, relations of affinity with relations of consanguinity.
 - 4. Makes some use of transparently descriptive terms.
- 5. At no point recognizes the principle of seniority which is all but universal in aboriginal America (e.g., "older brother" and "younger brother").
 - 6. Possesses a number of distinctive vocative terms.

IV. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES DUE TO MR. P. C. CALDER

To 1. Neither Mr. Calder nor Mr. Matheson seemed very familiar with the term 'o''ls. "Grandfather" and "grandmother" Mr. Calder has heard 'o'''lsı' used are generally used instead. among the Gitlaxt'ä'mike band, further up the river, and is inclined to think that the term was originally confined to the upper villages, there having been old dialectic differences among the Nass River people that are now ironed out. This hardly seems likely in view of of the fact that the term 'o''s was easily remembered by Chief Barton, of Kincolith, which is at the very mouth of the river, and has been obtained for Tsimshian proper by Dr. Boas (through Nahum Tate) and by Mr. Beynon. When the Tsimshian terms were obtained, Mr. Matheson remembered hearing 'o''uls used in his childhood for "great-grandmother," but was not certain whether it also applied to "great-grandfather." Mr. Calder claimed that if it was necessary to distinguish the "great-grandparent" from the "grandparent," it could be done by referring to the latter as "my great grandfather" ('wi't'e'sım niye''e'i) or "my great grandmother"

('wi't'e'sım nt'se''et'sı'). It is difficult to believe that these paraphrases are anything but modern imitations of the English terms, though Mr. Calder claimed they were old Nass River usages.

To 2, 3. Mr. Calder claimed that in the old days the maternal and paternal grandparents were distinguished, but he does not remember how this was done.

To 5. The term $b\ddot{a} \cdot b'$ can also be used with the possessive suffix: *þā''bi'* "my father" (male speaking), but only as a vocative, not as a term of reference. The term hädi''i evidently has the first person singular possessive suffix. Mr. Calder fancied this term was derived from hät, the word for "intestines," but this is simply an example of folk-etymology. Mr. Matheson gave similar folk-etymologies for the Tsimshian terms for "grandfather" and "grandmother," which he has learned from an old Tsimshian. Both of these Indians claimed that the older members of their tribes knew the "real" meanings, i.e., the supposed etymologies. of all the kinship terms. The existence of such folk-etymologies for kinship terms is itself an interesting fact. The probable etymology of hädi''i has been suggested to me by Miss Theresa Mayer. fact that the same non-vocative form for "father" is used by both males and females in Nass River and Tsimshian (Dr. Boas states that Tsimshian a'b is used by women only for "father," but this is incorrect; ä'bo "my father" is an obsolescent term indicating great respect and used by both sexes) and, further, the fact that the Tsimshian vocative does not seem to distinguish the sex of the speaker make it likely that the Nass River usage is a secondary one. The word hädi"i cannot be explained by reference to anything else in Nass River or Tsimshian. It is altogether likely that it is simply borrowed from the Haida vocative ha'da'i, used by a female child in addressing its father. This term is evidently simplified from the regular vocative, xa'da'i, of Haida xa't-ga, xa'd-, the term for "father of female." The Haida differentiation of "father" according to the sex of the child applies to both vocative and non-vocative forms. This would be but one of several facts tending to show that the Haida had closer cultural relations with the Nass River people than with the Tsimshian proper. The Nass

River problem is complicated by the existence of a phonetically similar term in Upper Lillooet: $h\ddot{a}'t\epsilon$ "father" (vocative only, apparently for both sexes).

To 6. This term includes also the "father's brother's wife." No. 25 rests on a misunderstanding. The term $n j' x^a i'$ $(n j' x^a i')$ is simply a diminutive or endearing form of the more formal $n \omega$." This $n j' x^a i'$ "my little mother" is not only used endearingly for the mother, mother's sister, and father's brother's wife, but also, by a curious reciprocal usage, for the child or grandchild of an affectionate mother or grandmother. In the latter sense it can only be used by a female.

To 7a, 7b. The term $n\ddot{a}'\ddot{a}t'$ is also used in a wider sense. It may be employed by any man or woman in addressing a male to express great regard and affection. The term $d\ddot{a}'l$ is used analogously, except that it may be employed by a woman only. There are also two terms of reference, not used as vocative or with possessive suffixes, for "boy, son" and "girl, daughter." From birth up to the time that he is given a name, the son of a family is referred to as gine''es; from birth up to the time that the first mark is made on her lower lip for the eventual insertion of a labret, the daughter is known as 'axq'e't's, literally "without a labret mark." These terms are paralleled by the Tsimshian gine''es and ga'''us.

To 15. According to Mr. Calder, nākc is not used as a vocative. The proper vocative usage for "spouse" is a teknonymous one. If the mother has a son or daughter young enough to be referred to as gine''s or 'axq'e't's, her husband will address her as noxc gine''s or noxc 'axq'e't's, "mother of the boy!" or "mother of the girl!" Analogously, the wife will address her husband as nogwo''t's gine''s or nogwo''t's 'axq'e't's, "father of the boy!" or "father of the girl!" When the spouses no longer have a son or daughter young enough to be referred to as gine''s or 'axq'e't's, they address each other as "father of so and so!" or "mother of so and so!", using the name of one or the other of their sons or daughters.

To 25. This term, as already noted, is simply a form of the word for "mother." See preceding note and note to 6.

To 28, 29. These terms were misunderstood. No. 29 is merely a collective form of 28; its meaning is "relatives all together." The terms do not specifically refer to blood-relatives, but apply to all relations, whether by blood or marriage. If necessary, the blood-relative may be distinguished as lap-wilä" ick", "self-relative, relative par excellence."

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